

Personal Essay Grades 9-12 Skills List

The writer of a competent personal essay demonstrates most or all of the following skills:

PURPOSE/AUDIENCE

- Focuses on the purpose of relating the significance of a central idea
- Communicates the significance of the central idea
- Narrows the topic
- Uses an individual voice, often informal
- Creates a title which captures the essence of the piece and creates reader interest

IDEA DEVELOPMENT/SUPPORT

- Develops ideas by using relevant supporting details from life experiences
- Describes emotions, thoughts, and insights
- Clarifies details through explanation and connections
- Draws conclusions and develops them for the reader

ORGANIZATION

- Writes an engaging lead
- Places ideas and details in meaningful order
- Organizes the essay into paragraphs
- Uses transitions between ideas
- Maintains coherence and unity
- Concludes the essay effectively

SENTENCES

- Writes complete and varied sentences

LANGUAGE

- Chooses language appropriate to the purpose and audience
- Writes in first person
- Uses descriptive language
- Maintains consistent verb tense
- Makes subjects and verbs agree
- Employs correct usage

CORRECTNESS

- Spells correctly
- Uses correct end punctuation, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes
- Capitalizes correctly
- Makes few errors in correctness which do not interfere with the meaning of the piece
- Cites references and documents sources (when necessary)

<p>As students move from grade to grade, they demonstrate growth in the control and complexity with which they use these skills.</p>
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